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## THE PHYSIQUE OF THE ANCIENT HAWAIIANS

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THE primitive Hawaiian type is rapidly vanishing. Like many of the island peoples of the Pacific, contact with the white race has wrought far more woe than weal. The Caucasian vices were acquired with much greater facility than were the sober virtues, and a variety of influences, racial and sociologic, have led to the decimation of what was at one time one of the finest peoples in the Pacific Ocean.

It is not the purpose of this paper to delineate the successive stages in the extinction of the ancient Hawaiian, nor to analyze the complex factors that have so rapidly undermined the race, but rather to present a somewhat detailed sketch of the bodily characteristics of the typical native in the prime of his "golden age." The pathetically rapid shrinkage of the native population may be visualized from the following data. Captain Cook's estimate in 1778, which may have been somewhat, although not greatly, exaggerated, was 400,000. Five decades later, in 1823, the census showed only 142,000. At the close of another decade the native population dropped to 130,000, a shrinkage of 12,000, or at the rate of 100 decrease per month. The next interval of thirty-six years witnessed a frightful decrease of two thirds of the total population, reducing the natives to 44,000. In 1900 there were but 30,000; the past ten years have brought a decrease of over 10,000, and to-day, in 1916, there are probably not 16,000 pure-blooded Hawaiians.

The modern tourist who visits the Hawaiian Islands sees very few of the pure-blooded natives; those in Honolulu, the capital city, are very largely "part-Hawaiians" or hybrids, and a very considerable percentage of the natives residing in outlying districts have foreign blood. The official statement of population as given in the last report of the Governor of Hawaii (1915), records—in round numbers—26,000 native Hawaiians for 1910 and 24,000 for 1915, a decrease of 2,000, or over 7 per cent. in five years. The mongrel or part-Hawaiian population is given as 12,500 for 1910, and 14,800 for 1915, an increase of 2,200, or 18 per cent. for 5 years. It should be emphasized that

a large portion, perhaps thirty per cent., of the natives listed in the above figures as "native Hawaiians" are not in fact, pure-blooded Polynesians, but have varying proportions of mixed blood. The natives have intermarried freely, both in and out of wedlock, with all who came to their shores, since the days of the first explorers, so that to-day it is practically impossible to absolutely determine pure lines of descent.

In striking contrast with the degenerate mixtures that characterize the modern native stand the records of the first explorers as to the splendid and beautiful physique of the primitive Hawaiian. Captain Cook, the first English discoverer of the islands, describes the chief Kane-ena as "one of the finest men I ever saw. He was about six feet high, had regular and expressive features, with lively dark eyes; his carriage was easy, firm, and graceful." Bryan, in his "*Natural History of Hawaii*," states:

At the time of the discovery of the Hawaiians they were physically one of the most striking native races in the world . . . as a race they were tall, shapely, and muscular, with good features and kind eyes. In symmetry of form the women have scarcely been surpassed, if equalled, while the men excelled in muscular strength.

Anthropologists agree that the ancient Hawaiian was one of the finest physical types in the Pacific, and compared very favorably with the best types from any other part of the world. They were tall and well developed, with splendidly shaped torsos, and fine muscular limbs of excellent proportions. According to measurements compiled by Topinard, the Hawaiians have greater manual strength than the Micronesians, Australians, Negroes, Iroquois, Chinese, French seamen, or American soldiers, and are only surpassed by the Iroquois in strength of back. The average height was about five feet ten inches, and many of the chiefs were over six feet. A skeleton from one of the ancient burial caves measured six feet seven and three quarters inches, and, as Bryan states, "there is sufficient evidence to establish the fact that men of even larger stature were by no means unusual."

The physique of the chiefs and their families was so superior to that of the common people that some anthropologists have thought them to be of a different tribe or race. The difference is not to be accounted for in this way, however, but rather to the excellent care taken of the children of the nobility, their better food and other conditions of life, and their healthful sports and exercises. The drudgery was done by the common

people and slaves; the chiefs devoted themselves to the development of bodily and mental superiority. Captain King (1778) states:

Those [chiefs] whom we saw here were, without exception, perfectly well formed; whereas the lower sort, besides their general inferiority, are subject to all the variety of make and figure that is seen in the populace of other countries. They seem to have very few native diseases among them, but many of the chiefs suffer dreadfully from the immoderate use of the awa.

The physical superiority of the chiefs is striking negative evidence against the popular belief in the bad effects of in-breeding. The chieftain class married habitually within itself, very commonly within the same family. Frequently a chief married his own sister, in order that the offspring might have the highest rank. These very close intermarriages were a permanent policy of the Hawaiian nobility during a period of at least many hundred years. There is absolutely no evidence of deterioration of any sort. On the contrary, all who saw the chiefly classes in the early days agree as to their striking bodily and mental superiority.

The color of the Hawaiian was an olive-brown or rich brown, never black nor conspicuously reddish. The common people, who were constantly engaged in fishing, field labor, and the like, were usually darker, through exposure to the weather, than the chiefs and women of rank, who avoided the sun. The variation in hue was considerable, ranging from a light coffee brown to a dark reddish-brown. Occasionally there was a distinct olive tint. After intermingling with Europeans this range of color was, of course, greatly accentuated with the varying degrees of hybridism.

The skin of the healthy, well-kept primitive Hawaiian was by no means unattractive. Coupled with their superb physique it gave them the appearance of "burnished statues" or "bronze Greek gods." It is a matter of common observation among travelers that in the dark-skinned peoples the nude figure does not give the impression of lack of clothing—there is absent that glaring contrast which the white body exhibits when disrobed. When the Hawaiians saw white men for the first time, they thought that the latter were suffering from some serious skin disease.

In the ancient régime the better class of natives kept their skins in excellent condition, through daily baths in the sea and in fresh water, and by oiling the body with coconut oil. The

cheeks of the young men and maidens were rosy, and the skin gave every evidence of abounding vitality.

The chiefs and women of rank kept their skin and bodies in perfect condition through an elaborate system of *lomi-lomi* or massage. The body was stretched at full length on the mats, and the operator (sometimes there were several operators) gave an exceedingly thorough and vigorous massage, not only rubbing, but also kneading, pressing, thumping, pulling, and using a number of other motions peculiar to the art. The noble person receiving the massage would commonly sleep during this highly beneficial performance, which often lasted for several hours.

Many of the chiefs and women of their families have been remarkable, not only for their height, but also for their weight. Four hundred pounds was formerly not unusual for one of this favored class, and three hundred pounds was a prevalent weight among the nobility. This corpulence was much more common among the women than the men, and was due to a variety of factors: (1) A diet consisting very largely of excessively starchy foods, such as *poi*, bananas, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, etc. Meat, chiefly in the form of fish and other marine animals, was a distinctly minor item in the diet. (2) Habitual over-eating. The Hawaiian nobility, like those of medieval European stocks, were often gross feeders. Incredible quantities of food would be consumed at a single meal. Gluttony was the prerogative of aristocracy, very much as was intoxication. (3) An indolent mode of life. As in other aristocracies, all the menial and productive labor was performed by the lower classes; the upper stratum was provided with abundant leisure, which was commonly abused. (4) For the women, obesity was a part of the ideal of feminine beauty, and was cultivated to a gross and grotesque degree.

A distinctive character of the ancient Hawaiian, and of the Polynesian peoples generally, was the ease and grace with which the limbs were habitually moved. The gait of the men and women alike was almost invariably graceful, smooth and dignified. The stately deportment of the chiefs and priests is noted by all the early explorers. The Polynesian mode of walking lacked all of those nervous, jerky motions that are so characteristic of many European peoples. The beautiful muscular development, and the absence of nervous temperament, were alike manifested in the tranquil poise and unhurried gait of the primitive Hawaiian.

In the movements of the arms a similar grace and control

was distinctive. The gestures of the orator or chief were smooth, sweeping, and as impressive and finished as those of a cultivated white man. In the dances the arms played a very important part—many of the “dances” were performed by large numbers of persons seated—and were moved with beautiful rhythm. In those dances in which a large company participated the movements of each individual were coordinated with extraordinarily precise harmony with those of the others, a rhythmic precision far more accurate than that, for example, of the modern Occidental ballét.

Tatuing has become wholly extinct. The art itself is forgotten, and there are now no tatued natives, nor have there been for many years. The Hawaiian never developed systems and patterns of tatu as elaborate as those of his South Sea Island congeners, the Samoans and the Maoris. It is entirely probable that the primitive Polynesians who were the first discoverers of the Hawaiian Islands, and the progenitors of the Hawaiian people, left the South Pacific dispersal center, Samoa, before the art of tatuing had evolved to its final, highly elaborate designs. However that may be, the Hawaiians at the time of the discovery by Europeans, were very sparingly tatued. Tatuing appears to have been more prevalent on Kauai than on the other islands of the group. It should be noted that the Kauaians were distinguished from the natives of the other islands by a number of archaic traits and customs.

The Hawaiians had neither the complicated thigh- and hip-tatuing of the Samoan, nor the ferocious facial tatuing of the Maori. The art was confined largely to the males, and so far, as the records show, was a prerogative of rank. Unlike the Maori and Samoan women, the Hawaiian females do not appear to have used the tatu, save for a curious custom which Captain King records as follows:

The custom of tattooing the body they [the natives] have in common with the rest of the natives of the South Sea islands, but it is only at New Zealand and the Sandwich Islands that they tattoo the face. They have a singular custom amongst them, the meaning of which we could never learn—that of tattooing the tip of the tongue of the females.<sup>1</sup>

Upon contact with Europeans the natives abandoned their own modes of tatuing, and thus the records are very scanty. The available evidence, however, indicates that the patterns were much coarser and inartistic than those of the Samoans. In many instances the markings were limited to a few spots on

<sup>1</sup> The women also sometimes had the back of the hand marked with a pattern somewhat similar to that of an open-work glove.

face, near the eyes or mouth. One famous chief, Ka-hekili, had one side of his body, from head to foot, tatued, so that he appeared half brown and half black, a pattern like a jester's costume.<sup>2</sup>

There are no records indicating special symbolic significance to the patterns, like those of the Bornean head-hunters. The lowest class in the Hawaiian social system—the slaves or *kauwa*—usually captives of war, were marked or branded on the forehead, but this seems to have been distinct from the tatu, and was regarded as a sign of infamy or disgrace. The opprobrious epithets, *lae-puni* and *maka-wela*, which were applied to the slaves, have reference to the brand or mark.

The Hawaiian head was well formed, and closely resembled that of the best European types in contour and proportions. It rarely exhibited the deformities which characterize the skulls of many primitive peoples. The skull was sub-brachycephalic or "mesaticephalic" in type. The cephalic indices of a large number of living "specimens" averaged 82.6. Those of an extensive series of skulls average 79.0, with a minimum of 75.0. This range is similar to that found among the Chinese people. The Hawaiian skull was never prognathous. Broca found among the Hawaiians the highest orbital index that he had ever observed. The jaws were of good proportions, resembling those of European types, with well-formed chin and cheeks. Projecting or noticeably receding jaws were rare.

The hair was black or dark brown. It was straight, slightly wavy, or curly; never frizzy or kinky like that of the negro or Papuan, nor lank like that of the Malayan. It was strong, and usually of rather coarse texture; very fine texture was rare. Old age brought gray or white hair; baldness was very exceptional. The hair of the women was long, but no unusual lengths are recorded. There is no evidence to show that very long hair was looked upon as a special attribute of feminine beauty. Alexander states that "it was the fashion among the women to wear the hair short in front and on the sides of the head, and to turn up the edges on the forehead and temples with a wash made of lime or white clay." The custom of heavily liming the hair was not practised in the Hawaiian Islands as commonly as in the South Pacific. The hair of the men was cut in a variety of peculiar styles, sometimes with a mane-like crest over the center of the crown, sometimes with long locks reaching down toward the shoulders. The beard of the men was thin and

<sup>2</sup> Tatuing was sometimes done as a token of mourning at the death of a friend or chief.

sparse, and restricted chiefly to the chin and lips. In many instances it was plucked out, as was the hair on the legs and arms. The typical native man was smooth, and the chest was usually lacking in the hairy growth characteristic of many Europeans. Captain King states:

The same variety in the manner of wearing the hair is also observable here as among the other islanders of the South Seas; besides which they have a fashion, as far as we know, peculiar to themselves. They cut it close on each side of the head down to the ears.

The face was moderately broad, with a kindly, open countenance, and features quite regular and often beautiful. The young people of both sexes were, with few exceptions, good looking, and the girls were often of striking and voluptuous beauty. Captain King writes:

Many of both sexes had fine open countenances, and the women in particular had good eyes and teeth, and a sweetness and sensibility of look, which rendered them very engaging.

Bryan states:

In general, their features were strong, good humored, and in many instances, when combined with their splendid physiques, produced a striking and impressive personality that gave the impression of their belonging to a very superior race.

The profile was regular, not prominent, and usually pleasing. In many instances it closely resembled the profiles of the higher Caucasian types.

The nose was of good length, well shaped and arched. Frequently it was somewhat flattened, due to artificial pressure and massage in infancy, as a flattened nose was esteemed much more highly than a pointed or protruding one. The practice of massaging the newly-born babes, especially those of the nobility, was general and elaborate, and was supposed to greatly influence the future beauty of the child. For example, the outer angles of the elbows, particularly of the girls, were vigorously massaged, as a sharply pointed or angular elbow was looked upon as a very ugly characteristic.

The eyes were large, well formed, and expressive. Until European mixtures were introduced they were invariably black. Occasionally the eyes were a trifle oblique, but this character was comparatively rare, and apparently of no anthropologic significance. The lashes and eyebrows were black, well-formed, and often quite long. Many of the younger women had beau-

tiful eyes. As indicators of character the Hawaiian's eyes were typically kind, cheerful, mild and generous. The crafty, cruel, bloodthirsty, and lustful types occurred, of course, as they do in any human society, but under ordinary conditions they were distinctly in the minority, and did not represent the normal Hawaiian life. The eyes of the ancient Hawaiian chief of good character were as fine and expressive as those of a high-grade European. Those of many of the women were notably bright, clear, and attractive. The ability of the primitive Hawaiian as a sailor and a woodsman indicates that the power of vision was well developed, although not to any remarkable degree. There is no indication that he possessed the keenness of vision customarily ascribed to such peoples as the American Indian and the Australian aborigine.

The Hawaiian mouth was well formed. The lips were usually of medium thickness, frequently voluptuously thick and everted; rarely thin. The upper lip was usually a trifle shorter than the lower, giving to the mouth a peculiar, not unpleasant, and easily recognizable, racial form. The thick lips, particularly of the younger women, were well molded and attractive. Like the eyes, the mouth was typically indicative of kindness, mildness, and generosity. The tight, pursed, narrow mouth was very rare.

The teeth were excellent in shape and arrangement, and of a glistening pearly whiteness. The beautiful teeth of both the men and the women are frequently mentioned by the early explorers. The beauty was often defaced by a curious custom of knocking out one or more of the front teeth as a token of grief upon the death of some friend or chief; in many instances the middle-aged and older people would lack many of the front teeth, both upper and lower, as a result of this senseless custom.

It is not the purpose of this paper to exaggerate the physical excellences of the primitive Hawaiian, nor to give the impression that splendid manly physique and sensuous feminine beauty were universal. As in all human communities, Hawaii also had the ugly, the maimed, the dwarfed, the diseased, the weaklings. Many of the older women were veritable hags; many of the older men were disfigured by dissipation or by drudgery. Captain Cook described a chief named Koa, who "was a priest, and had been in his youth a distinguished warrior. He was a little old man, of an emaciated figure; his eyes exceedingly sore and red, and his body covered with a white leprous scurf, the effects of an immoderate use of the awa." In general, however, the people seemed to be remarkably free from disease or bodily disfigure-

ment; it was not until the vile venereal diseases of the white sailors and traders began to spread among the people, that deterioration set in. These and other Caucasian diseases, the inordinate use of the liquors plentifully supplied by the white man, and a variety of other debasing influences undermined the constitution of the people with astonishing speed; thus the primitive Hawaiian, with fine physical and mental traits of the greatest promise, is disappearing, and in a few years will have vanished forever.